Career Management: Change & Career Resilience

Changes in an organization lead to a psychological process of transitions for the employees of that organization. The phases of transition are:

1. Letting go of the old identity; dealing with the loss(es)
2. Going through a period of time when the old is gone but the new isn't yet fully integrated into our identities
3. Making a new beginning

Transitions can be emotional experiences. It's natural to feel a whole host of emotions, from positive to negative, during a transition. Some of the most difficult negative emotions include: Anger, Discouragement, Guilt, Hopelessness, Inadequacy, Irresponsibility, Lethargy, Overwhelm, Rejection, Self-Doubt, and simply Stuck.

Curiosity is a great antidote to help cope with the negative emotions that can accompany change. Curiosity can help you begin exploring ideas for what you can do about a situation that makes you angry. It can remedy discouragement through helping you focus on what an attainable next step could be.

Happenstance Theory focuses on the importance of creating and transforming unplanned events into opportunities for learning. This is not the same as leaving everything to chance. Rather, this theory advocates an active searching process while also remaining open to new and unexpected opportunities that were not planned.

Developing the following five skills will help one recognize, create, and use chance to create career opportunities:

1. Curiosity: exploring new learning opportunities
2. Persistence: exerting effort despite setbacks
3. Flexibility: adapting to changing attitudes and circumstances
4. Optimism: viewing new opportunities as possible and attainable
5. Risk Taking: taking action in the face of uncertain outcomes

An open-minded person is in the middle of what was and what will be; being undecided means that all the data are not in yet.[1]

Happenstance Exercise

Answer the following questions:

1. How have unplanned events influenced your career?
2. How did you enable each event to influence you?
3. How do you feel about unplanned events in your future?

4. How is your curiosity excited? How could you explore the career implications of your curiosity?
5. What is one chance event that you wish would happen to you? How can you act now to increase the likelihood of that desirable event?
6. Not all chance events are positive. How have you tended to react to negative chance events? If you've tended to react with discouragement and inaction, how could you instead react by feeling challenged to exert even greater effort?
7. How have you been blocked from doing what you want to do?
8. How have others overcome blocks like that?
9. How would you begin overcoming that block?

[1]Mitchell, K.E., Levin, A.S., & Krumboltz, J.D. (1999). "Planned happenstance: Constructing unexpected career opportunities." *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 77, pp. 115-124.

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